

by major economic dislocations. Finally, the amendment provides for temporary State health care assistance.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues know, this is our third effort to pass a much-needed stimulus package. Regrettably, the other body has failed thus far to act with equal dispatch on this important legislation. Today we will attempt once again to move forward with a carefully crafted, balanced package of measures designed to stimulate economic recovery and to provide assistance to those affected by the recent economic downturn. It is our hope that the other body will respond in an affirmative fashion to this initiative and that we can quickly move this important legislation to the President's desk as soon as possible.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support both this resolution and the motion to be offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS).

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to strongly oppose this rule because Republican leaders are using this rule to block immediate assistance for the millions of Americans who cannot find work in this recession.

Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker, plain and simple. They are not hard to understand, and, unfortunately, they are not surprising, because Republican leaders have consistently used their power to block bipartisan compromise on economic security.

Mr. Speaker, we want a simple straight up or down vote on a 13-week extension of unemployment benefits. The Republicans, on the other hand, want a 13-week extension, plus a junked-up stimulus package, a package they know has no chance of being passed by the United States Senate. So their cynical action has the effect of denying people the 13 weeks of unemployment benefits. This is not very complicated.

Last Sunday morning I was sitting around at home and I was watching one of my favorite Sunday interview shows, Fox News Sunday, and the Republican leader of the other body was on that show. He was asked a question. He was asked, "Well, Senator, what about the fact that we are going to have a budget deficit again, that we are going to have a budget deficit of \$70 billion, \$80 billion or \$90 billion this year?"

His response was, "Don't worry about that budget deficit. We are never going to pass a stimulus package, so we won't have a budget deficit."

Now, the package that the other side has brought forward, again, has a \$70 billion cost, contribution to the deficit, in fiscal year 2002, a \$70 billion cost in fiscal 2003, a \$175 billion cost over the next 5 years. They know it is not going anywhere.

What we are asking is a straight up or down vote on something that has al-

ready passed the Senate, a 13-week extension of unemployment benefits. They have refused to give us that straight up or down vote, and we will resist the rule because of that.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) has asked for the opportunity to offer the measure that passed the Senate. They denied that in the Committee on Rules. We will present that on the floor again this morning. Today, unfortunately, we have done everything we can.

We can stop politics as usual, we as a body, if we want to. We can pass a non-controversial bipartisan bill to help the millions of Americans who are suffering through this recession. Make no mistake, these hard-working people need help now.

Remember, this recession started last March, nearly 1 full year ago, and a bad economy only got worse after September 11. Since that day, more than 1 million Americans have seen their unemployment assistance expire, and another 2 million workers will exhaust their benefits over the next 6 months. Today, almost 8 million Americans are unemployed and looking for work.

These are people who work hard and play by the rules. But now, through no fault of their own, they are out of work. They have got bills to pay and children to feed. They need a helping hand just to get through until they can find another job to support their families.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the Committee on Rules last night, the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), testified that Republican leaders in the House are trying to help laid-off workers. They have tried before, he said, and they will keep on trying.

Well, as much as one might admire such persistence, Mr. Speaker, Americans who lose their jobs need more than "trying." "Trying" will not pay their rent. It will not buy you groceries. And it will not pay for your health care or prescription drugs. The truth is, what Republican leaders call "trying" is nothing more than partisan gamesmanship and politics as usual.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans can stop trying today, and instead can act to help laid-off workers. That is what the United States Senate did last week when it acted unanimously to provide 13 additional weeks of unemployment benefits to Americans who have lost their jobs in this recession, and that is what the Congress has done during the past five recessions.

Mr. Speaker, of course House Democrats would like to do much, much more than the simple measure passed by the Senate. We have tried repeatedly to expand eligibility for unemployment insurance and to ensure that you do not lose your health care when you lose your job. We have proposed fiscally responsible tax relief to stimulate the economy and give a boost to small business.

Democrats have reached out to find bipartisan consensus on these ideas. In fact, the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY) came to the Committee on Rules last night with a substitute motion that would have combined business depreciation relief with the extension of unemployment benefits, but Republican leaders refused to budge. They would rather play election-year politics than work together to restore the economy.

Mr. Speaker, we can stop that today. We can fill the most pressing need created by the recession. We can pass extended unemployment assistance so the President can sign it into law tomorrow, but for that to happen, Republicans will have to put politics aside for just a few hours this morning. They will have to stop using out-of-work Americans as pawns for their partisan games. They will have to stop holding laid-off workers hostage to the amendment the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) is offering today, a warmed-over version of the same old Republican plan that has failed twice before in the United States Senate.

Mr. Speaker, that Republican plan is not bipartisan. It will not do much to help the laid-off workers or provide economic stimulus. And because it will put Americans further in debt, it threatens Social Security and Medicare and is just plain dangerous to the economy over the long term.

But Republicans have the majority in the House. They can bring it up any time they want. Today, however, by attaching it to the bill passed by the Senate, Republican leaders are blocking immediate help for those Americans hardest hit by the recession.

Mr. Speaker, the choice we face this morning could not be more simple: Out-of-work Americans have been waiting months for assistance. If you defeat this rule, we can act today to give them the helping hand they need. But if you pass this rule and block the non-controversial bipartisan Senate bill, you will force laid-off workers to keep on waiting.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to show a little heart on this Valentine's Day. Do not hold laid-off workers hostage. Defeat the rule and provide them with the help they need now.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE
The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members to avoid improper references to Senators, such as quoting remarks of Senators in the media.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN).

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that my friend from Texas thinks we should not try, that we should not try, to help those who are currently unemployed because of the events of September 11,